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hensive humanity and the serious and momentous fact that, instead of multiplying beggars, this charity multiplies citizens, the children of the first tenant almost always acquiring an energetic and provident spirit which renders them independent of all assistance.

BESSIE B. CROFFUT.

OUR FISH SUPPLY AND ITS DEFICIENCIES.

LAST year, according to Cousin Bull's sombre publications, aptly termed blue books, there were landed upon his shores nearly 800,000 American tons of fresh fish, but for our knowledge of Uncle Sam's supply we must await his census; he enlightens us only once a decade. London's consumption of fish in 1896 was nearly 221,000 tons, whereof two-thirds was haddock. We prodigal Americans do not itemize our transactions so particularly, there being no figures, census or otherwise, indicative of the consumption of Greater New York. Its approximation, however, to that of the British Metropolis is unlikely, despite the superiority of our table fish, our two favorites, cod and bluefish, excelling in such regard the lowly haddock and herring, that respectively lead in London. Popular choice, however, is governed by its purse, but no European epicure has our command of such marine delicacies as Spanish mackerel, pompano, sheepshead, shad, red snapper and whitefish, all ordinarily of moderate price. Nevertheless, the British flatfish are worthy objects of our envy, especially the turbot, brill, and, above all, the peerless sole, with which we have nothing to compare. Our repeated efforts to establish this gastronomic treasure in our waters have been abortive, but it is regularly imported, retailing at seventy-five cents a pound. In our off-shore waters there is no lack of fine flatfish, but beam trawling, as practiced by the British, is expensive, and we have so many other species of fish that are finely flavored, abundant and cheap that it will not pay to drag the sea bottom, even for the rich harvest that awaits such gathering. Among these choice objects of our neglect is the pole flounder, practically unknown in our markets, but which, in flavor and quality, almost equals the kingly sole. Some day our score species of nearby flatfish, together with other neglected but easily obtainable deep-sea species, will be accorded their meed of public favor, and vast stores of finny provision, now lying undisturbed, will enlarge and vary our dietary. With a diversion to the fisherman of a due proportion of the profits now absorbed in inefficient marketing methods, a long-hoped-for and not improbable reform, our many fallow fishing grounds can become the basis of profitable operations.

The alimentary value of fish is indisputable; it is wholesome and nutritious, and in its wide range of quality and flavor affords gratification to the coarsest as well as to the most refined palate. Moreover, in primary cost, it is the cheapest of flesh foods, and should, therefore, be the universal aliment, everywhere a staple dish upon the family board. To most, however, it is substantially a luxury; in many localities it is not obtainable fresh, and so falls into public disfavor; but even where presented in acceptable condition, the accommodation is usually effected with difficulty and expense, involving a corresponding limitation of sale. Thus it is that the consumer is dissatisfied, the dealer is not content, and the producer, the poor fisherman, rightly bewails his lot, for he profits least. It can be truthfully said that there is no branch of civilized effort wherein the producer receives so small a proportion of the ultimate or consumer's price, as does the toiler

of the sea for the unchanged product of his labor. Our New England fisheries have declined one-third in value within the last fifteen years for lack of a remunerative market, and yet proper facilities of distribution would enable the thriving millions of our inland population to absorb the entire catch at advanced prices. The meagreness of the returns will be appreciated by the following quotations of recent wholesale prices: In 1897 the average price of haddock in London was about two cents a pound, the rate in Boston and New York closely approximating the British, and in the two American cities cod has frequently been quoted at the same figure. Abroad, the marketing of catches of herring for less than a cent is a common occurrence, and in this country so scant is the pecuniary return that a portion is converted into fertilizers. All that the Irish fishermen received last year for their catch of mackerel was, upon an average, less than one and a half cents. At the height of every season upon the Columbia River shad falls to a cent, much of the catch being thrown away, a common disposition of fish that fails to command a remunerative price. In July and August last the following staple fish, in prime condition, were more or less frequently quoted at a cent a pound—bluefish, weakfish or squeteague, porgies or scup, poilock, mullet and yellow perch; and from such prices the inefficiency of our marketing methods may be inferred.

It should be remembered that this is the day of the refrigerator car, the cold storage warehouse and the chill chambered ship; that from Chicago and from remote Argentina, Australia and New Zealand many millions of carcasses of beeves, sheep, rabbits and poultry annually reach London in excellent condition, and finally, that such portion of the carnal aliment as is transported in a chilled, rather than a refrigerated state, is received by the British consumer in even better flavor and quality than when first embarked upon its voyage of thousands of leagues. The great mass of the American people are ignorant of the excellence of their many varieties of marine fish, and are denied the opportunity, for lack of obtainable facilities, of giving them the appreciation that is their due. Nor does the limited fraction of the public that is so favored command its finny luxuries at a reasonable price; every housekeeper is sensible that her market bills diverge widely from the average rates accorded the retailers, whose rendered accounts never hint at a tumble of bluefish to a cent a pound.

The fishmonger is the public's servant, and it must be said, in justice to him, that his master is capricious and exacting, indisposed to go out of his way to secure any advantage of service, but, whenever the humor seizes him, must be accommodated at his very door. Co-operation with the factor in marketing a big catch is not to be thought of; the customer will not be troubled in any way, and, if incommoded, easily avails himself of a varied market to effect a satisfactory substitute. The business talent and splendid organization that have so amazingly developed the meat industry of Chicago and of the West could probably achieve results almost as wonderful if directed to the systematic distribution of our fresh fish. Not only would millions of our vast population be thus benefited by their easy attainment of a cheap, wholesome and palatable flesh food, but the declining fisheries of our Atlantic seaboard would be revived, inland transportation and other distributive industries would be stimulated, and capital find a field of profitable as well as beneficent employment. France expends annually immense sums in bounties to her fishermen, with the object of maintaining a nursery of seamen for her naval marine. It would seem judicious to provide for the

probably increased future requirements of our navy, not by wasteful subventions to our fisher folk, but by promoting the establishment of a home market for the much-needed product of their languishing industry.

It is the fastidiousness of the appetite of civilization, perhaps equally with increase of population, that excites the concern of thoughtful men as to the adequacy of our future wheat supply. For the civilized world is becoming a hive of bread and meat eaters; it is forsaking the food staples of its fathers and cleaving unto new idols; it is the nicer taste, in addition to the multiplication of its peoples, that causes consumption to tread so closely upon the heels of a production that has discernible limits. Half a century ago potatoes were the mainstay of the mass of the Irish people, oatmeal was the earlier dependence of the Scotch, and to-day as yet unjoined to the ever swelling army of breadeaters, we find, even in our Southern States, a frequent retention of the ancestral "hominy and hoe cake" to the exclusion of the modern staff of life. The rate of individual meat consumption has increased as markedly as that of wheat, but it is likely that the limit of the production of edible flesh will be sooner attained than that of the leading cereal. The ultimate absorption by our steadily increasing population of the large surplus of wheat now exported seems certain, with the inevitable result of establishing a higher range of prices. No food return from land is so scanty and unprofitable as that derived from the raising of cattle, and the conversion, therefore, of much grazing into cultivated land, with a consequent meat scarcity, may be anticipated as the natural outcome of a probable permanent advance in wheat. From the inexhaustible sea we could, however, continue to reap a harvest of unfailing abundance, for in its depths lie, as yet undisturbed, vast reservoirs of excellent but unfamiliar food fish. We have ventured only to the threshold of the treasure house of the deep, but its future revelations of novel alimentary wealth will enrich the dietary of our posterity, and form an ample store of varied sustenance.

The popular preference for meat, while to some extent due to its variety of culinary adaptation, is based in greater degree upon a confidence in its superior sustaining and stimulating power. This confidence is probably not misplaced, for the tendency of a meat diet to make animals savage, as well as the greater restlessness of carnivora in general, would indicate that it was a greater nervous excitant than fish, the latter being served as fodder to cattle in Norway and formerly also upon Cape Cod, without apparent impairment of the animal's temper. Upon human beings unused to meat its effects are more noticeable, and as to the confirmed eater of animal flesh it is asserted that his pulse is quicker and his average life shorter than that of the total abstainer. While a larger consumption of fish would perhaps be to the dietetic advantage of our nervous civilization, it is more evident that land adapted to the agricultural support of human beings cannot be indefinitely devoted to the raising of cattle. Such wasteful occupation will cease whenever the multiplication of humanity demands the fullest cultivation of its available soil, and thus it may reasonably be anticipated that meat and not fish will occupy the subordinate place in the dietary of the future civilization. We know not how the problem of the sustenance of its ever-increasing millions will be faced by our posterity, but we may rest assured that while the maintenance of an adequate food supply may absorb more of human effort than at present, it will not be until that effort is relaxed that gaunt famine will stalk through a decaying world.

A. H. GOURAUD.